

DUTIES, RIGHTS, PREROGATIVES, AND IMMUNITIES OF CONSULAR OFFICERS

Convention signed at Monrovia October 7, 1938

Senate advice and consent to ratification August 1, 1939

Ratified by the President of the United States August 14, 1939

Ratified by Liberia November 16, 1939

Ratifications exchanged at Monrovia November 21, 1939

Proclaimed by the President of the United States November 30, 1939

Entered into force December 21, 1939

54 Stat. 1751; Treaty Series 957

The President of the United States of America and the President of the Republic of Liberia, being desirous of defining the duties, rights, prerogatives and immunities of consular officers of each country in the territory of the other country, have decided to conclude a convention to that end and have appointed the following Plenipotentiaries; that is to say:

The President of the United States of America:

Lester A. Walton, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Liberia, and

The President of the Republic of Liberia:

His Excellency C. L. Simpson, Secretary of State of the Republic of Liberia,

Who, after having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed upon the following Articles:

ARTICLE I

Each of the High Contracting Parties agrees to receive from the other, consular officers in those of its ports, places, and cities, where it may be convenient and which are open to consular representatives of any foreign country.

Consular officers of each of the High Contracting Parties shall, after entering upon their duties, enjoy reciprocally in the territories of the other all the rights, privileges, exemptions and immunities which are enjoyed by officers of the same grade of the most favored nation. As official agents, such officers shall be entitled to the high consideration of all officials, national or local,

with whom they have official intercourse in the State which receives them.

The Government of each of the High Contracting Parties shall furnish free of charge the necessary exequatur of such consular officers of the other as present a regular commission signed by the chief executive of the appointing State and under its great seal; and they shall issue to a subordinate or substitute consular officer duly appointed by an accepted superior consular officer with the approbation of his Government, or by any other competent officer of that Government, such documents as according to the laws of the respective countries shall be requisite for the exercise by the appointee of the consular function. On the exhibition of an exequatur, or other document issued in lieu thereof to such subordinate, such consular officer shall be permitted to enter upon his duties and to enjoy the rights, privileges and immunities granted by this Convention.

ARTICLE II

Consular officers, nationals of the State by which they are appointed, and not engaged in any profession, business or trade, shall be exempt from arrest except when charged with the commission of offenses locally designated as crimes other than misdemeanors and subjecting the individual guilty thereof to punishment. Such officers shall be exempt from military billetings, and from service of any military or naval, administrative or police character whatsoever.

In criminal cases the attendance at court by a consular officer as a witness may be demanded by the prosecution or defense, or by the court. The demand shall be made with all possible regard for the consular dignity and the duties of the office; and there shall be compliance on the part of the consular officer.

When the testimony of a consular officer who is a national of the State which appoints him and is engaged in no private occupation for gain is taken in civil cases, it shall be taken orally or in writing at his residence or office and with due regard for his convenience. The officer should, however, voluntarily give his testimony at the trial whenever it is possible to do so without serious interference with his official duties.

No consular officer shall be required to testify in either criminal or civil cases regarding acts performed by him in his official capacity.

ARTICLE III

Consular officers, including employees in a consulate, nationals of the State by which they are appointed, other than those engaged in private occupations for gain within the State where they exercise their functions, shall be exempt from all taxes, National, State, Provincial and Municipal, except taxes levied on account of the possession or ownership of immovable property situated in, or income derived from property of any kind situated or belonging

within the territories of the State within which they exercise their functions. All consular officers and employees, nationals of the State appointing them, shall be exempt from the payment of taxes on the salary, fees or wages received by them in compensation for their consular services.

The exemptions of the foregoing paragraph shall apply equally to officials who are duly appointed by one of the High Contracting Parties to exercise in its behalf essential governmental functions in the territory of the other High Contracting Party, provided that such officials shall be nationals of the State appointing them and shall not be engaged in private occupations for gain within the country to which they are accredited. The State appointing them shall communicate to the other State satisfactory evidence of the appointment and shall indicate the character of the service of the officials to whom the exemptions of this Article are intended to apply.

The Government of each High Contracting Party shall have the right to lease land and to lease acquire and own buildings required for diplomatic or consular premises in the territory of the other High Contracting Party and also to erect buildings in such territory for the purposes stated subject to local building regulations.

Lands and buildings situated in the territory of either High Contracting Party, of which the other High Contracting Party is the legal or equitable owner and which are used exclusively for governmental purposes by that owner, shall be exempt from taxation of every kind, National, State, Provincial and Municipal, other than assessments levied for services or local public improvements by which the premises are benefited.

ARTICLE IV

Each of the High Contracting Parties agrees to permit the entry free of all duty and without examination of any kind, of all furniture, equipment and supplies intended for official use in the consular offices of the other, and to extend to such consular officers of the other and their families and suites as are its nationals, the privilege of entry free of duty of their baggage and all other personal property whether accompanying the officer, his family or suite, to his post or imported at any time during his incumbency thereof; provided, nevertheless, that no article, the importation of which is prohibited by the law of either of the High Contracting Parties, may be brought into its territories.

The exemptions of the foregoing paragraph shall apply equally to officials who are duly appointed by one of the High Contracting Parties to exercise in its behalf essential governmental functions in the territory of the other High Contracting Party, provided that such officials shall be nationals of the State appointing them and shall not be engaged in private occupations for gain within the country to which they are accredited. The State appointing them shall communicate to the other satisfactory evidence of the appoint-

ment and shall indicate the character of the service of the officials to whom the exemptions of this Article are intended to apply.

It is understood, however; that this privilege shall not be extended to officers who are engaged in any private occupation for gain in the countries to which they are accredited, save with respect to governmental supplies.

ARTICLE V

Consular officers may place over the outer door of their respective offices the arms of their State with an appropriate inscription designating the official office, and they may place the coat of arms of their State on automobiles employed by them in the exercise of their consular functions. Such officers may also fly the flag of their country on their offices including those situated in the capitals of the two countries. They may likewise fly such flag over any boat or vessel employed in the exercise of the consular function.

The quarters where consular business is conducted and the archives of the consulates shall at all times be inviolable, and under no pretext shall any authorities of any character within the country make any examination or seizure of papers or other property deposited with the archives. When consular officers are engaged in business within the territory of the State where they are exercising their duties, the files and documents of the consulate shall be kept in a place entirely separate from the one where private or business papers are kept. Consular offices shall not be used as places of asylum. No consular officers shall be required to produce official archives in court or testify as to their contents.

Upon the death, incapacity, or absence of a consular officer having no subordinate consular officer at his post, secretaries or chancellors, whose official character may have previously been made known to the Government of the State where the consular function was exercised, may temporarily exercise the consular function of the deceased or incapacitated or absent consular officer; and while so acting shall enjoy all the rights, prerogatives and immunities that were granted to the consular officer.

ARTICLE VI

Consular officers of either High Contracting Party, nationals of the State by which they are appointed, may, within their respective consular districts, address the authorities concerned, National, State, Provincial or Municipal, for the purpose of protecting their countrymen in the enjoyment of their rights accruing by treaty or otherwise. Complaint may be made for the infraction of those rights. Failure upon the part of the proper authorities to grant redress or to accord protection may justify interposition through the diplomatic channel, and, in the absence of a diplomatic representative, a consul general or the consular officer stationed at the capital may apply directly to the Government of the country.

Consular officers shall have the right to interview, to communicate with, and to advise their countrymen within their consular districts; and, upon notification to the appropriate authority, to visit any of their countrymen who are imprisoned or detained by authorities of the State in which they exercise their consular functions; to assist them in proceedings before or relations with such authorities; and to inquire into any incidents which have occurred within the consular district affecting the interests of their countrymen.

Nationals of either of the High Contracting Parties shall have the right at all times to communicate with the consular officers of their country.

ARTICLE VII

Consular officers, in pursuance of the laws of their own country may (a) take, at any appropriate place within their respective districts, the depositions of any occupants of vessels of their own country, or of any national of, or of any person having permanent residence within the territory of, their own country; (b) draw up, attest, certify and authenticate unilateral acts, translations, deeds, and testamentary dispositions of their countrymen, and also contracts to which a countryman is a party; (c) authenticate signatures; (d) draw up, attest, certify and authenticate written instruments of any kind purporting to express or embody the conveyance or encumbrance of property of any kind within the territory of the State by which such officers are appointed, and unilateral acts, deeds, testamentary dispositions and contracts relating to property situated, or business to be transacted, within the territories of the State by which they are appointed, embracing unilateral acts, deeds, testamentary dispositions or agreements executed solely by nationals of the State within which such officers exercise their functions.

Instruments and documents thus executed and copies and translations thereof, when duly authenticated by the consular officer, under his official seal, shall be received as evidence in the territories of the High Contracting Parties as original documents or authenticated copies, as the case may be, and shall have the same force and effect as if drawn by and executed before a notary or other public officer duly authorized in the country by which the consular officer was appointed; provided, always, that such documents shall have been drawn and executed in conformity to the laws and regulations of the country where they are designed to take effect.

ARTICLE VIII

In case of the death of a national of either High Contracting Party in the territory of the other without having in the locality of his decease any known heirs or testamentary executors by him appointed, the competent local authorities shall at once inform the nearest consular officer of the State of which the deceased was a national of the fact of his death, in order that necessary information may be forwarded to the parties interested.

In case of the death of a national of either of the High Contracting Parties without will or testament whereby he has appointed testamentary executors, in the territory of the other High Contracting Party, the consular officer of the State of which the deceased was a national and within whose district the deceased made his home at the time of death, shall, so far as the laws of the country permit and pending the appointment of an administrator and until letters of administration have been granted, be deemed qualified to take charge of the property left by the decedent for the preservation and protection of the same. Such consular officer shall have the right to be appointed as administrator within the discretion of a tribunal or other agency controlling the administration of estates provided the laws of the place where the estate is administered so permit.

Whenever a consular officer accepts the office of administrator of the estate of a deceased countryman, he subjects himself as such to the jurisdiction of the tribunal or other agency making the appointment for all necessary purposes to the same extent as a national of the country where he was appointed.

ARTICLE IX

A consular officer of either High Contracting Party shall within his district have the right to appear personally or by delegate in all matters concerning the administration and distribution of the estate of a deceased person under the jurisdiction of the local authorities for all such heirs or legatees in said estate, either minors or adults, as may be non-residents and nationals of the country represented by the said consular officer, with the same effect as if he held their power of attorney to represent them, unless such heirs or legatees themselves have appeared, either in person or by duly authorized representative.

A consular officer of either High Contracting Party may on behalf of his non-resident countrymen collect and receipt for their distributive shares derived from estates in process of probate or accruing under the provisions of so-called Workmen's Compensation Laws or other like statutes, for transmission through channels prescribed by his Government to the proper distributees.

ARTICLE X

A consular officer shall have exclusive jurisdiction over controversies arising out of the internal order of private vessels of his country, and shall alone exercise jurisdiction in cases, wherever arising, between officers and crews, pertaining to the enforcement of discipline on board, provided the vessel and the persons charged with wrongdoing shall have entered a port within his consular district. Such an officer shall also have jurisdiction over issues concerning the adjustment of wages and the execution of contracts relating thereto provided, however, that such jurisdiction shall not exclude the jurisdiction conferred on local authorities under existing or future laws.

When an act committed on board of a private vessel under the flag of the State by which the consular officer has been appointed and within the territorial waters of the State to which he has been appointed constitutes a crime according to the laws of that State, subjecting the person guilty thereof to punishment as a criminal, the consular officer shall not exercise jurisdiction except in so far as he is permitted to do so by the local law.

A consular officer may freely invoke the assistance of the local police authorities in any matter pertaining to the maintenance of internal order on board of a vessel under the flag of his country within the territorial waters of the State to which he is appointed, and upon such a request the requisite assistance shall be given.

A consular officer may appear with the officers and crews of vessels under the flag of his country before the judicial authorities of the State to which he is appointed for the purpose of observing the proceedings or of rendering assistance as an interpreter or agent.

ARTICLE XI

A consular officer of either High Contracting Party shall have the right to inspect within the ports of the other High Contracting Party within his consular district, the private vessels of any flag destined or about to clear for ports of the country appointing him in order to observe the sanitary conditions and measures taken on board such vessels, and to be enabled thereby to execute intelligently bills of health and other documents required by the laws of his country, and to inform his Government concerning the extent to which its sanitary regulations have been observed at ports of departure by vessels destined to its ports, with a view to facilitating entry of such vessels therein.

In exercising the right conferred upon them by this Article, consular officers shall act with all possible despatch and without unnecessary delay.

ARTICLE XII

All proceedings relative to the salvage of vessels of either High Contracting Party wrecked upon the coasts of the other shall be directed by the consular officer of the country to which the vessel belongs and within whose district the wreck may have occurred, or by some other person authorized thereto by the law of that country. Pending the arrival of such officer, who shall be immediately informed of the occurrence, or the arrival of such other person, whose authority shall be made known to the local authorities by the consular officer, the local authorities shall take all necessary measures for the protection of persons and the preservation of wrecked property. The local authorities shall not otherwise interfere than for the maintenance of order, the protection of the interests of the salvors, if these do not belong to the crews that have been wrecked and to carry into effect the arrangements made for the entry and exportation of the merchandise saved. It is understood that such merchandise

is not to be subjected to any customhouse charges, unless it be intended for consumption in the country where the wreck may have taken place.

The intervention of the local authorities in these different cases shall occasion no expense of any kind, except such as may be caused by the operations of salvage and the preservation of the goods saved, together with such as would be incurred under similar circumstances by vessels of the nation.

ARTICLE XIII

The territories of the High Contracting Parties to which the provisions of this Convention extend shall be understood to comprise all areas of land, water, and air over which the Parties respectively claim and exercise dominion as sovereign thereof, except the Panama Canal Zone.

ARTICLE XIV

The present Convention shall be ratified and the ratifications thereof shall be exchanged at Monrovia. The Convention shall take effect in all its provisions thirty days from the day of the exchange of ratifications and shall remain in full force for the term of five years thereafter.

If within six months before the expiration of the aforesaid period of five years neither High Contracting Party notifies to the other an intention of modifying, by change or omission, any of the provisions of any of the Articles in this Convention or of terminating it upon the expiration of the aforesaid period, the Convention shall remain in full force and effect after the aforesaid period and until six months from such a time as either of the High Contracting Parties shall have notified to the other an intention of modifying or terminating the Convention.

In witness whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed this Convention and have affixed their seals thereto.

Done in duplicate, at Monrovia, this seventh day of October, 1938.

LESTER A. WALTON [SEAL]

C. L. SIMPSON [SEAL]